13: Curtis E-4, 5 (ca. 1900) 1908 NT14 Plateau Yumans NT14 Havasupai

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The Indians of the United States and Alaska

Written, Illustrated, and
Published By

Edward S. Curtis

Edited By

Frederick Webb Hodge

Foreword By

Theodore Roosevelt

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Field Research Conducted Under the
Patronage of
J. Pierpont Morgan

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The Havasupai

133 The home of the Havasupai is in Cataract Cañon, a
[131] branch of the Grand Cañon of the Colorado. Without question it is the strangest dwelling place of any tribe in America. In all the long leagues of the cañon's windings there is but one small spot where the gorge widens. Here is an amphitheatre. Its bottom has filled with earth, the weatherings of untold ages, and at the spot where the narrow rift begins to widen the blue water springs from the earth. The clean, clear cut, perpendicular walls of red sandstone tower four hundred feet toward the heavens, and back of these sheet walls are others, but broken, ragged, cut, cañoned, and tumbled into a wilderness of rock, ever mounting higher, until at the cañon's rim one is three thousand feet above the bottom of the chasm in which these people have their home. Standing on the edge and looking down into this bewildering gorge one sees many fanciful forms, fashioned through eons from the world or rock: castles, citadels, pyramids, pinnacles, and sphinx-like sculptures, tinted and mystified with the incomparable atmospheric coloring of the desert, and ever wrapped in death-like stillness. As he gazes there is nothing to suggest that half a mile below and twenty miles away, at the bottom of this awful gash, is a garden spot, and a village of humans.

[131] To reach this little oasis there are but two trails, and
487 he who selects one will wish he had taken the other; both follow routes chosen by prehistoric man. The sandalled feet of unknown generations toiled up and down these tortuous ways ages before there was need of making them accessible for beasts of burden. After hours of winding about sheer cliffs, down narrow gorges, patiently picking a /98/ way back and forth across crumbling rocky
131 slopes, one reaches at last the home of the Havasupai. The floor is half a mile wide, scarcely two miles long, and contains an
133 area of less than five hundred acres. The never-ending stream from which this small but picturesque tribe derives its name, (1)

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1. The name Havasupai, "Blue Water People," is of Yuman origin, from aha',

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101 water; vasú, blue; and apá, man; and was first applied to them by the Walapai and other Yuman tribes, who had been impressed by the peculiarly transparent blue of the stream flowing through Cataract Canon. By several neighboring tribes and by early writers the Havasupai were called Coconinos, or Cohoninos. This is undoubtedly a Hopi word, for the Hopi still call them Kotŧunína, which, they say, is from kóhu, wood, and nína, kill, hence "Wood-killers," referring to the former Havasupai custom of breaking off limbs of trees for firewood with clubs. The name survives in that of Coconino county, Arizona.

[313]

133 and which makes life possible in the depths of the gorge, flows through the length of the little garden spot, then in a cataract leaps from the floor of the cañon to be caught in a pool below.

137 While the brink of the cañon lies in the high plateau region, the land of the piñon, cedar, and pine, the home of the Havasupai is in almost a subtropical spot that produces luxuriant

771 vegetation with fruits of several kinds. Ask a Havasupai whence came these fruits and vegetables, and he will tell you, "God brought them, all but the figs." This frank expression as to the origin of his garden products reflects a Havasupai peculiarity. Ordinarily Indians will not mention their gods by name, but the Havasupai discuss them with the same familiarity that they would their neighbors. With them, as indeed with all Indians, everything animate and inanimate is of divine origin.

773 Havasupai mythology differs but slightly from that of the
197 parent stock, and the difference in language is dialectic only.
174 Notwithstanding the similarity in myth and language, the separa-
144 tion must have occurred at a very early date, for in their features the Havasupai bear little resemblance to the Yuma or the Mohave.

[142] They are below the average Indian in stature, while the Mohave and the Yuma are far above.

161 /99/ In 1903 the Havasupai numbered about 250, but in three years disease has diminished their population to 166. The

The /99 cont./
131 inaccessibility of their cañon home has tended to keep them
177 immune from outside influences, so that in many ways their
life is still delightfully primitive. Their typical dwelling
342 consists of a framework covered with brush or tule and some-
times with an outer covering of earth. In summer a four-post
brush shelter is erected, which affords protection from the sun and
allows free circulation of air.

262 The agave plant, cut and prepared in much the same way
as by the Apache, has always been an important article of food
among these people. Other native vegetal foods are grass seeds
224 and piñon nuts. From time immemorial the Havasupai have
[221] been hunters. On the approach of winter they left the cañon for
the upper levels, built wickiups of boughs and bark, and
spent the cold season in hunting. Deer were the principal game,
although they killed some mountain sheep and an occasional black
[251] bear. Much of the venison was cut in thin strips and dried for
237 summer use. Deerskin dressed by the Havasupai was considered
281 the best by all neighboring tribes; consequently, it not only
[439] furnished clothing, but was an important medium of barter. But
the life of the Havasupai has changed. Game is scarce, and
177 224 the Government does not willingly grant them permission to
648 hunt on the surrounding mesas, hence there is little wonder that
the wrinkled veterans long for the old days when game was
plentiful and they hunted where they would. "Now all is
changed," they say. "We cannot go out of the cañon without
asking the white man. We dare not hunt deer, as the game must
be saved for the Háiko. We are no longer men; we are like little
children; we must always ask Washington!"

241 Corn is now their chief staple, besides which they raise
262 beans, squashes, melons, pumpkins, sunflowers, peaches, apricots,
171 and figs. They prepare corn in countless ways, corresponding
252 largely to those of the Hopi. In fact, the modes of preparing
corn by all tribes of /100/ the Southwest are much the same.
Much of the crop is allowed to ripen on the stalk; this is later
ground into meal on the metate. Quantities of green corn are
harvested, roasted in large pits with the husks on, and hung to
dry. This may be ground or simply shelled and cooked, either
alone or with beans, meat, and dried squash. Like the figs, their

/100 cont./ LIKE THE FIGS, THEIR
177 peaches and apricots were derived from the whites, but so long
245 ago that they are now regarded as native.

291 The aboriginal dress of the Havasupai was simple and rather distinctive. The one arbitrary garment for the men was, of course, the breech-cloth, all additions to which were an
[554] evidence of wealth and position. For the Havasupai shirt the foundation was a large deerskin with a hole cut in the middle, like a poncho. This was loosely fastened together at the sides and held close to the body with a belt. Stitched to it were loose, baggy sleeves, open under the arms as far as the elbows. Shoulder, sleeve, and side seams were freely decorated with deerskin fringe. The leggings, close fitting and fringed at the sides, reached to the hips and were met below with high-topped moccasins. A full suit required five good-sized deerskins. The
[302] men tied their long hair in a knot at the back of the head and cut the fore part in a low bang over the eyes. The principal garment of the women, which reached a little below the knees, consisted of two deerskins sewn together at the top and sides and with openings left for head and arms. It was liberally ornamented with fringe, worn sleeveless, and belted at the waist. Their boot-legged moccasins reached to the knees. The hair, cut in a
[302] bang over the eyes, hung loose and unkempt.

285 The arts of the Havasupai are seen at their best in the
[439] basketry. Many of their tray-shaped baskets are used for barter with neighboring tribes, who know them as "Coconino." The
[415] same form, coated with earth, is used as a cooking utensil,
[251] water being boiled in them by the use of heated stones; the water bottle also is of basket-work, coated with piñon gum. A
482 coarsely woven, cone-shaped burden /101/ basket is carried on the back, supported by a strap passing across the forehead.
321 Spoons and small utensils were formerly made from mountain-
415 sheep horn.

622 Chieftainship is hereditary, the voice of the tribe determining which of the male relatives of the last incumbent is best fitted to rule. The present chief is Wimái, who succeeded Kóhat, familiarly known as "Navaho." Kóhat was considered by all who knew him to be a man of unusual strength of character, broad

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622 and fair-minded; he ruled his people with unquestioned firmness, yet with fairness.

428 611 551 [614] [170] Children belong to and inherit property through the father. No trace of a clan system has been found, even in the naming of children, the means by which totemic names are perpetuated among the Yuman tribes of the Colorado river. In these tribes all the female descendants in the male line bear the gentile name, if such it may be called, but the Havasupai name their girls from some incident in their lives or from individual peculiarity, as, for instance, Tasáwiché, "Sunlight through the Leaves," Matěkaliwa, "Flapping Ears," and Chěkŭchěku, "Dancing between Two Men." In so small a tribe a complete

582 [182] [614] clan organization, even if such existed, could hardly be perpetuated, since marriages between blood relations, though comparatively remote, are inevitable, and in the case of the Havasupai they are so common that no one can fathom the intricacies of his various relationships to other members of the

584 585 595 421 tribe. Marriage is by consent of the girl's parents and is without ceremony. Polygamy being common, property is held in severalty by man and wife, and in case of separation each takes his own.

764 [177] Until very recently the dead, as in all Yuman tribes were cremated; the present form of burial is in shallow graves in the rocks at the foot of the cliff. After death the family and friends assemble to mourn and tell the departed one that they are troubled, for they do not know where he has gone. Formerly

768 horses were killed at the grave, and all earthly possessions of the deceased, even /102/ his peach trees, were burned. Food was burned with the body, and the dwelling was razed and taken away to be rebuilt.

755 756 The medicine-men in their practices use no herbs, but resort wholly to incantation, believing that power to heal comes to them in childhood through dream-songs. Besides singing, the medicine-man sucks the seat of pain and pretends to extract therefrom either evil blood or foreign objects that cause the ill-

756 ness. In case of successful treatment the medicine-man is remunerated. He must keep the average of failures at a minimum,

/102 cont./

756 for if several deaths should follow his ministrations his avenging tribesmen would be sure to start his spirit on its journey to the
B44 after-world. Women at childbirth are attended by four women, not necessarily medicine-women, although they use medicine songs.

171 Except for differences due to local coloring, the
773 Havasupai have the same creation legend and other mythic lore as the Yuma and the Mohave.